

Idaho Energy Buzz
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Small School District Gets Idaho's First Biomass Heating System

By Linda Cawley, IDWR Information Specialist

Council School District has found a solution to its energy dilemma, and it's a triple hit!

An official groundbreaking ceremony at the school district site in May to begin construction of a new biomass heating system that will be fueled with wood chips. The system will heat buildings on the district's campus, including the elementary and senior high schools.

The school district, in a small town of about 1,000 people, has been experiencing huge power and utility bills for several years. The buildings that make up the school district's campus have been heated with a radiant electric heat in the elementary school and an old diesel-fueled boiler.

In addition, none of the buildings have fresh air ventilation or air conditioning for use during summer school in June and August.

Financing

The entire project will cost \$2.8 million. Two grants from the U.S. Forest Service's "Fuels For Schools" program for \$510,000 will help cover the cost of installing the new heating system. A \$2.2 million bond passed by the district's patrons will pay the remainder.

Council taxpayers will pay \$1.2 million on the bond and the remaining \$1 million will be paid by the school district.

Through the Idaho Energy Division's Rebuild Idaho Program, Siemens Building Technologies of Boise completed an audit on the buildings in 2003. The audit showed that by using a biomass heat system, updating the lighting and installing automated controls, the district could save \$1 million in energy the first 15 years.

Science Demonstration

In addition to the new heating system, the district received a \$94,800 grant from the U.S. Forest Service-Southwest Idaho Resource Advisory Committee to build two 900-square-foot greenhouses to conduct agricultural science demonstration projects.

The new biomass system will heat the greenhouses, a win-win situation for the Forest Service, the school district, its patrons, and Council's high school students.

Rebuild Idaho Program

The Energy Division's Rebuild Idaho Program initiates community action by assisting cities, counties, school districts, businesses and industries in developing sustainable, long-term energy and resource efficiency strategies.

The Rebuild Idaho staff work with communities, school districts and universities throughout Idaho to promote economic development through efficient resource management in buildings. Once a plan is developed, the Rebuild Idaho staff help partnerships turn ideas into results. Rebuild Idaho services include:

- Facilitative assistance to develop energy and resource use plans;
- Selective building surveys to identify efficiency measures and savings;
- Technical assistance to help choose quality energy products;
- Free energy-related training on new technologies and programs; and
- Information on funding options for projects.

Rebuild offers a variety of training on ways to reduce energy costs while, at the same time, improving occupant comfort.

Building owners and managers are realizing that a trained building operations staff is needed to minimize problems with heating, cooling and ventilation. Problems with sick building syndrome, overheating, and over cooling often can be resolved with improved operations practices.

For more information about the Rebuild Idaho Program, call the Idaho Energy Hotline, 1-800-334-SAVE, and ask for Sue Seifert, or visit the Energy Division's web site at www.idwr.idaho.gov/energy.